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AUTHOR Meyenn, Bob; Parker, Judith; Maher, Katie
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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an analysis of the complexity of the interrelationship of boys, schooling, and the construction of identity. Boys often respond to cultural cues, and teachers' management strategies cannot be used in isolation from the larger social context in which boys are situated. Insights from literature and research should form the explanatory framework, thus serving as the discourse from which meaning is adduced. However, teachers continuously stereotype boys' behavior and unknowingly exhibit power relations in pedagogy that take the form of surveillance, normalization, exclusion, classification, distribution, totalization, and regulation. Such behavior reveals inadequacies in teacher-education programs, and it is important that teachers be given evidence of flawed pedagogies. Teachers need information on bullying and violence, and they should be taught to interrogate the debate on boys and schooling so that they can make informed decisions. All of this has implications for teacher-education programs, many of which do not adequately prepare teachers to cope with increasing diversity in schools. Such programs should be reconceptualized so that they are embedded in connectedness rather than in categorization. (RJM)

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Come along then the naughty boys: Perspectives on boys and discipline

Bob Meyenn
Judith Parker
with Katie Maher

Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst 2795
NSW Australia

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Preamble

In October 1996 a fourteen year old male student knifed a teacher in an inner city secondary school. The Sydney Morning Herald's headline of the day read:

> **Teacher stabbed in schoolyard attack**
>
> (By Greg Bearup, Chief Police Reporter
> SMH 24/10/1996)

Other pertinent headlines around this time included:

> **Study on problem students**
>
> (SMH 24/10/1996)
>
> **Union calls for action on *recalcitrant* students**
>
> (SMH 24/10/1996)
>
> **Teachers afraid to take classes alone since colleague wounded Sydney's day of violence**
>
> (SMH 25/10/1996)
>
> **Stabbed teacher pleads for action to stop violence**
>
> (SMH 26/10/1996)
>
> **Violent pupils to get own school**
>
> (SMH 6/11/1996)
>
> **It's a jungle out there**
>
> (SMH 11/11/1996)

The Minister for Education, the Honorable John Aquilina, already less than popular with the Teachers' Federation with whom he had been engaged in protracted negotiations over salary and conditions for the states' 60,000 (approximately) public teachers, wanted decisive advice to fix the problem of violence in schools. He turned to the Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching whose role is to provide strategic advice to the Minister on issues relating to all aspects of the quality of teaching, including initial teacher education, induction and professional development.

Specifically he wanted advice on *training requirements [needed] to give teachers the capacity to assert, maintain and restore classroom discipline, as well as strategies to cope with bullying and playground violence.*

Such advice should seek to identify

- *current strategies/practices, policy and support programs relating to the management of student behaviour as addressed initial teacher education and in ongoing professional development programs; [and]*

- *aspects that student teachers and beginning teachers find most challenging in dealing with the management of student behaviour in and out of the classroom.*

A working party was set up to respond to the Minister's reference. Information was gained from a variety of sources including teacher educators and teachers. For the purposes of this paper, the meetings with teachers were the most instructive. Forty five randomly selected beginning teachers (defined as those who had been teaching between one and three years) and forty two randomly selected experienced teachers (those who had been teaching between ten and fifteen years) met as focus groups and discussed the questions outlined as appendix A and appendix B.

A final draft of the report to the Minister was presented to the Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching in February this year as *Teacher preparation for student management: Responses and directions* (Eltis, 1998). The report, *inter alia* examines the key issues to emerge from the investigation and the implications for action around initial teacher education, the induction of neophytes into the profession, in-school support and continuing professional development for all teachers.

But there is one resounding silence. There is no mention of gender nor is there any reference to the direction of current research on masculinities. This is despite the fact that the most remarkable feature of the focus group discussions was that discipline problems were predominantly perceived to be caused by boys. Indeed the pronoun *he* was scarcely ever

replaced by *she* as teachers described their frustrations in trying to engage boys in meaningful learning experiences.

The paper which follows emerges from our concern that discussions of discipline, bullying and playground violence must be embedded in, and interrogated from, positions which acknowledge the complexity of the relationship between boys, schooling and the construction of identity (Connell, 1995), particularly if we are to move beyond the simplistic *hailing* of boys as problems or boys as victims. (Althusser, 1997; see also Davies, 1993)...*Come along then the naughty boys* is not only a statement; it's a sentence. That our teachers, with the best of intentions and genuine concern for the welfare of the students they struggle to teach, can continue to make such statements, is, in our view, an indictment of our present teacher education programs.

Boys and schools

Salisbury & Jackson (1996) write that *...much of teachers' time, energies and school resources already goes into picking up pieces after boys' routine, daily acts of vandalism, classroom disruption, bullying and harassment of girls and boys* (Jackson & Salisbury, 1996). They further argue that boys have monopolised the linguistic, social, psychological and physical space in mixed secondary schools. (See also Mahony 1995). Significantly, though, these writers are not reinforcing the binary oppositions of girl victim/ boy problem; their analysis is more nuanced and more respecting of the need to examine which boys, which girls. They recognise that boys often do poorly academically because of their identification with hegemonic masculine values and practices and just as importantly, they recognise that schools are institutional sites where boys masculinise their bodies – in gyms, playgrounds, sports fields – in conforming with peer pressure to be physically superior. They espouse the position that

> *Pursuing these traditional modes (of masculinity) traps many boys into severely limited subject, curricular and work choices as well as damaging the range of their emotional lives and social relationships* (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996: 4).

Not only Connell (1995) and Salisbury & Jackson (1996) but Mac an Ghaill (1996) and Kenway and Willis (1997), urge consideration of the contradictions experienced by young males around competing masculinities. Boys marginalised from the hegemonic form need spaces of possibility to explore identity and subjectivity. These spaces may well need to be created by sensitive, informed teachers who recognise *hailing* boys as problems will do little to overcome their alienation from schooling. The anti-social behaviour of many boys *cannot be reductively read as a product of resistance...[it] also acts as a legitimation and articulation of power and subordination* (Skells, 1991 in Mac an Ghaill, 1994: 162).

In discussions about boys and discipline in schools we should be interrogating the extent to which manifestations of anti-social behaviour arise from what Connell (1996) calls *protest masculinities*. That is, the way disadvantaged boys' experience of powerlessness results in *an exaggerated claim to the potency that European (middle class, dominant) culture attaches to masculinity* (Connell, 1996: 111). Poynting et al (1997) report that for Lebanese – Australian boys

> *Withdrawal of respect, or actively and deliberately behaving disrespectfully towards such authority figures (as teachers), restores a feeling of power to a less powerful social group.* (Poynting et al, 1997: 10).

Their interviews with Lebanese – Australian boys also highlights some interesting connections between lack of the dominant language and violence. One of the boys interviewed said "Australians have heaps of words that offend us...they can't fight for themselves".

> *...Violence compensates for the words that are not available; it ameliorates the humiliation of racism. The meaning that youths attach to this violence* resolves *in ideology, really unresolved contradictions occurring at the intersections of masculinity and ethnicity as well as class relations* (Poynting et al; 1997: 19).

Whilst it is easy for researchers and academics not faced with the diurnal task of helping adolescent boys (and girls) learn in sometimes over crowded classrooms, with the demands of inappropriate curriculum, it is equally easy to see how the expectations of teachers and the dominant culture that holds that disadvantaged boys are disruptive, perpetuates the hegemonies of class, race and gender in our schools. Pallotta–Chiarolli (1997) writes:

> *I have worked with staff who make highly inappropriate cultural assumptions about boys' behaviours. As a means of resistance and challenge, the boys may perform the very cultural stereotypes the school attends to, fears and expects. My brother Tony knew how to perform the tough, spoilt, sexist Italian boy for certain teachers, those who ignored his cultural background, referred to it only in negative contexts, or who made allowances for his disruptive behaviour as being part of his Italianness* (Pallotta-Chiarolli (1997: 18).

Complex issues of school management and the development of appropriate behaviour protocols cannot be treated in isolation from the larger social context in which they are situated. As McLean (1995) writes:

> *If we want boys to change, we also need to demand that the world they are expected to enter and survive within changes as well. We need to be turning the spotlight on ourselves and asking what sort of society we want to live in, how schools can attribute to building such a society, and what it is about schools, as they currently are, that gets in the way of creating such a community* (McLean, 1995: 9).

Becoming somebody is used by Wexler (1992) to encapsulate boys' and girls' primary motivation at school. The formal curriculum is not nearly as significant as peer and cultural interactions. McLean (1995) further suggests that

> *In dominant masculine culture, the need to be somebody is exaggerated and extreme. Competition and the struggle for power are central and school becomes a testing ground for a boys' successful assumption of an appropriate*

> *gender identity...boys who don't measure up are at best ignored and left out of things, both inside and outside of the classroom. This production of identity manifests in different ways in different class and cultural contexts* (McLean 1995: 10).

In any exploration then of boys and schools, of the playing out of anti-social behaviour in classrooms and in interactions between girls and boys and teachers and boys, the insights from the literature and from research should form the explanatory framework and be the discourse from which meanings can be adduced. Our involvement in the focus groups for the Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching, demonstrated that boys' behaviour was pathologised; boys were an essential and essentiatising category; exclusionary behaviour by boys was permitted; boys were foregrounded, girls remain at the back; issues of gender reach closure and are isolated from the world beginning teachers operate in; classroom management is predicated on control; there is little room for negotiation. The following vignette is but one telling example of our concern that questions of discipline, school culture and classroom organisation remain essentially unproblematised.

> *When I'm telling a story I get all the naughty boys to come up the front.* – Louise.
>
> Louise is a 1st year out teacher working in a metropolitan primary school on a grade one class. She is enthusiastic, committed and energetic and she wants the best for the children she teaches. She is concerned to develop strategies to overcome disruptive behaviour in her classroom. In a focus group with other beginning teachers, she offered the strategy of bringing the boys closer to her as a way of controlling their behaviour.

The exercise of power by teachers, their positioning of themselves; their positioning of boys, of boys in relation to girls; their pedagogical practices; their interactions with students, are all manifestations of the authority they present. Teachers cannot escape/avoid any more than can education systems, their role in upholding the dominant culture, of curriculum, of masculinities, of class, of race. These are so often naturalised. They become imposed on students, many of whom resist so that their resistance is interpreted as *misbehaviour* and/or *stupidity*. White, middle class, and hegemonic masculinity, is not as it *should* be; *other* groups are not lacking (Kenway, 1990). Unfortunately schools continue to function according

to the belief that *success at school* is about individual abilities rather than about the inequalities inherent in the race, class and gender divides. McLean (1995) argues that there is a direct connection between the role schools play in the reproduction of class privilege and hegemonic masculinity. Negotiating forms of masculinity which provide both street credibility and a means of working the white, middle class, authoritative education system, are not accessible options for many boys (McLean, 1995: 11). In other words, there are complex explanations for why 82% of both short and long term suspensions were imposed on boys in NSW in 1996 (NSW Department of School Education Annual Report, 1997). There is no one discourse that explains why *he* is almost exclusively the pronoun used in teachers' talk about discipline problems.

Absent also from the teachers' talk, were acknowledgments of the ambivalences in the exercise of power at the level of pedagogical practices. Gore (1998), drawing on the work of Foucault, studied the disciplinary practices at work in various educational settings: a physical education class in a secondary school; a first year teacher education group, a feminist reading group and a women's discussion group. She found, that power relations played out in pedagogy, took the form of surveillance, normalisation, exclusion, classification, distribution, totalisation and regulation. But these forms were not necessarily unproductive. What, however, is significant is that they are elements of an explanatory framework which can help us understand the complex relations existing in schools between those who teach, those who learn, those who resist and those who disrupt. Gore writes:

> *Documenting techniques of power, identifying which seem essential to the pedagogic enterprise and which might be altered is my own contribution to thinking how educators might exercise power differently. In bringing about educational reform, I argue that we must know what we are and what we are doing in order to address adequately how we might do things differently* (Gore, 1998: 248-249).

Like Gore (1998), Martino (1997) has also nuanced the concept of power using a Foucauldian framework. We would argue it is such nuancing that prevents discussions from solidifying along binary oppositions. It is holding, however tenuously, less determinant and deterministic

positions which will support teachers and educational systems interrogate current taken-for-granted, naturalised, practices and discourses. Power can be strategically deployed to effect certain outcomes. Within a regime of power/knowledge relations, Foucault situates what he terms *practices of freedom*. The focus is on *practices* because it draws attention to the productive rather than repressive nature of the workings of power within specific regimes governing the conduct of individuals (Martino 1997: 4). Such explanations need to be made available to teachers struggling to understand how they might organise meaningful learning experiences for students who seemed to have *little respect for teachers* (a comment made by one focus group).

Kenway's & Willis's (1997) position on why gender reform succeeds in schools is illustrative of *practices of freedom* and a measured teasing out by teachers of the implications for their own specifically situated practices, might render less determinant the meanings of boys, schools and identity construction/reconstruction.

> *In general, those schools and departments that were most successful, were open to and refreshed by new ideas and encouraged energetic intellectual exchange and change from below (from new and junior staff) as well as from outside. Their priorities and practices indicated that they supported, encouraged and celebrated difference and the entitlements of all students, but that they did not support difference built on dominances or entitlements based on those structures of power noted above. They recognised the importance for learning and identity of the head, the hand and the heart. They encouraged all students to accept responsibility for their behaviour and to take initiatives for change. They recognised that schools owe girls and boys the right to feel welcome, cared for and safe as well as the right to be educated about life as it is and as it might become if it were to fulfil their best hopes. The teachers in these schools recognised the importance of changing practices and themselves. Their schools modelled a better society* (Kenway and Willis, 1997: 208–209).

They, together with Salisbury and Jackson (1996), do not see men and boys as representatives of an undifferentiated, monolithic system of power which is static and unchanging. They

draw attention to the transformative implications of variety, difference and plurality, both between men and men and within individual boys and men. They see gender relations as historical and always in a state of flux. Their analysis emphasises that masculine and feminine identities are actively made, on a daily basis, in schools, (and of course other sites) through the dynamic of refusal and struggle. There are real, material social constraints and power imbalances but gender regimes are always shifting and contradictory.

Masculinity is *a configuration of practice " within" a system of gender relations* (Connell, 1995: 84) and such acknowledgment signals a role for teachers and schools (as too for other agencies) to support "little boys" into the desire to be not "those naughty boys".

We have argued in other places the need to bring together all agencies concerned with the health, well-being and education of young people (Meyenn & Parker, 1997). Too often discussions about discipline, are situated entirely within schools and education bureaucracies. This is isolating of the knowledge and experiences of other agencies, whose perspectives provide the lens for other readings less inclined to blame teachers and schools. We emphasise that policy makers need to place disruption by students in the larger context of the changing economic and political status of young people.

> *...national and international changes in the labour market and education policy have an impact on the position of young people; and they need to be seen as central in influencing their commitment to schooling...(Slee, 1995: 17).*

Bullying and violence

It is important that evidence of disruption in schools, disruption expressed as bullying and violence for example should be made available to teachers as they develop policies and practices to ensure schools are sites where all students, not only those attached to hegemonic groups, have opportunities to learn, to realise their potential, to be positioned to make choices, not have choices made for them.

Rigby's & Slee's (1991) survey of 685 Australian school children found that approximately one in ten children were subject to bullying. Boys are more likely to be the bullies and girls the victims. Factor analysis of subjects' responses suggested:

> *...a tendency to despise the victims of bullies; general admiration for school bullies and avowed support for intervention to assist the victim* (Rigby & Slee, 1991: 615).

The authors report in a later publication that 10% of Australian children are bullied *once a week or more* (Slee & Rigby, 1994: 3).

In 1992 a South Australian study showed of 980 children aged between 10 and 18, 18% of boys and 12% of girls indicated being bullied once a week. There were also significant differences between schools with incidences of bullying ranging from 19% - 34% for boys and 10% - 20% for girls. In line with overseas research, Rigby & Slee (1993 a) and Rigby & Slee (1993 b) found that victims of bullying are unhappy in school and are subject to low self esteem. Further, Ribgy & Slee (1994) conclude that recent Australian and overseas research highlights peer group victimisation as an important part of children's school experience. According to Teo's & Waugh's (1997) Western Australian research, bullying is related to disaffection. Students perceive strong sources of disaffection as *lack of teacher advice about personal problems, poor school organisation, uninteresting school work, not feeling safe and lack of teacher caring about student welfare* (Teo & Waugh, 1997: 34).

We need to acknowledge, in particular, the disadvantaged position of Australia's Indigenous People especially when the Prime Minister of the country is unable to apologise for two hundred years of discrimination experienced by Aboriginal people.

> *Cultural shifts have cut deeply into the foundation of certain sorts of masculinity and arguably this is particularly the case for men whose manual labour is an important source of masculinity and for those whose manhood was tied up in cultural traditions which have been destroyed by colonialism (for example, Australian Aborigines). An increasing amount of literature*

> *suggests men and boys, who lose power in a given arena look for new ways of reclaiming a sense of manhood, such as violence and scapegoating* (Kenway, 1995: 78-9).

The stark reality is that suicide rates of Australian Aboriginal people is significantly higher than the non-Aboriginal community (Hassan, 1996: 4).

Fitzclarence (1995: 37) goes so far as to declare that the

> *Hegemonic, competitive/academic curriculum is related to a trend that makes it increasingly difficult to come to terms with the socio-cultural complexity of violence.*

To expect schools, school systems and teachers to combat such a trend is on the one hand, unrealistic; on the other it is to fail to see the potential for a model of education that is transformative of the status quo. The techno-scientific/technicist curriculum of so many teacher education programs must be challenged if schools are to be genuinely safe places for all students and teachers.

Implications for teacher education

If we were to identify one significant feature of public schooling in the 1990's, it would be the increasing diversity of the student population. We now have students in our schools from more diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds than even ten years ago (Eltis, Meyenn, Parker 1993). If we then turn to the many criticisms of teacher education, we find that our graduates are inadequately prepared to cope with this diversity; our programs are still predicated on meeting the educational needs of an homogeneous population. Perhaps this is because most teacher educators throughout Australia have not taught in schools in the last two decades. (For detailed accounts of the criticisms of teacher education see, in particular, Beasley 1992; Beyer 1993; Beyer and Zeichner 1987; Clarke 1992; DEET 1992; Giroux 1992; Goodlad 1990; Grundy and Hatton 1995; Hansford 1992; Holmes Group 1985; Katz and Raths 1992; Smyth 1993; Tierney and McKibbin 1992; Turney and Wright 1990).

To take account of the diversity of school populations, to meet the educational needs of all children, not only those from the dominant, powerful group, teacher education has to engage in further serious critique in order to challenge and interrupt the taken for granted practices and policies which perpetuate inequality and injustice. Like Giroux (1992), Smyth (1993) and Grundy & Hatton (1995) we would want to see teacher education programs informed by discourses and practices emphasising social transformation rather than social reproduction.

The interviews and focus group discussions conducted as part of our work for the MACQT, together with discussions we have had with students from our University, suggest quite simply that the prevailing framework of programs of teacher education is largely technicist and lacking in the understanding that teachers have a fundamental role in striving to achieve social justice for all children.

Giroux (1992) calls for a radical reconceptualising of teaching, teachers' work and teacher education. He argues that the American public education system is in crisis because the positions educators work from are too narrow, too essentialising, too marginalising of voices and identities which are constructed as *other* by the dominant culture (Giroux 1992: 211). He is concerned, in particular, that too little account is taken of difference, especially in relation to race, (we would say also in relation to gender) because some intellectual positions write out socioeconomic inequalities through concepts like *cultural diversity* (Giroux 1992: 207). He further argues that these intellectual positions marginalise notions of agency and develop essentialist, separatist and often totalising narratives that *fail to recognise the limits of their own discourse in explaining the complexity of social life and the power such a discourse wields in silencing those who are not considered part of the insider group* (Giroux 1992: 208). For all the care that teachers of the focus groups exhibited, their utterances clearly indicate who is invited to speak and who is silenced. The limitations of their discourse and practices are unproblematised.

Giroux posits the need for teachers to encompass a border pedagogy, one which involves analysis of the ways:

> *the dominant culture creates borders saturated in terror, inequality and forced conclusions. At the same time, students should be allowed to rewrite difference through the process of crossing over into cultural borders that offer narratives, languages, and experiences that provide a resource for rethinking the relationship between the centre and the margins of power as well as between themselves and others* (Giroux 1992: 209).

An understanding of the relationships between teachers and the cultural and personal histories of their students, are essential if homogeneity is to be fractured and students of all backgrounds are to be accorded speaking positions ensuring their experiences of schooling are more inclusive and potentially more able to satisfy their needs as learners...and members of a democracy. Teacher educators must recognise that their programs of initial teacher preparation are often, too often, perpetuators of an exclusive pedagogy supportive of the status quo.

Grundy & Hatton (1995) explore in detail the way teacher educators' discourses and consequent practices sustain the status quo. Building on the work of Beyer and Zeichner (1987), which maintains that conservative ideology is dominant amongst teacher educators, they contend that teacher education should be *part of a wider political project...directed toward social critique and transformation* (Grundy & Hatton, 1995: 9). What is most interesting about their work is their conception of *conservative ideology*. For them it is insufficient to argue its existence as some monolithic principle. Through finely grained analyses of a number of teacher educators' discourses and practices, they designate three ideological positions: *social reproduction, social fulfilment and social agnosticism,* and suggest ways in which these positions might or might not permit the potential for interrupting taken for granted attitudes and values about issues of social justice and equity (Grundy & Hatton 1995: 8).

Smyth (1993, 1997) also argues for teacher education to be more socially critical; programs ought to be about *developing practices that, not only enable, but require, that we empower students to draw upon their own cultural resources as a basis for engaging in the*

development of new skills and interrogating existing knowledge claims (Sultana 1990: cited in Smyth 1993: 159). He continues

> *we should problematise our work suggesting a need to engage in four forms of action best characterised by several moments which predispose us to describe, inform, confront and reconstruct through asking questions like what do I do? What does this mean? How did I come to be like this? How might I do things differently?* (Smyth 1993: 160).

In other words, teacher education programs must be more firmly grounded in intellectual dispositions which unsettle.

The theorising of Giroux (1992), Grundy & Hatton (1995) and Smyth (1993, 1997) make strong cases for re-examining and reconceptualising teacher education. Each, in varying ways, calls for a wilder (to use McDonald's term) image to sustain our work. It is not sufficient for it to be technicist; it must be transformative if we recognise it as *part of a wider political project* (Grundy & Hatton 1995: 9). We need reconceptualising to make transparent the assumptions of our practices; to illuminate the chasm between our goals and these practices.

The reconceptualising

Such reconceptualising of teacher education programs should be embedded in connectedness rather than discreteness. But, our programs are often carefully compartmentalised as if the epistomological arguments of the past thirty years, let alone the enquiries into teacher education, have not existed. There are foundation studies, curriculum studies, content studies and the practicum and whilst there are attempts around the practicum to draw theory and practice together, they would appear to be unsuccessful. (See p.11 of this paper for critics of teacher education.) Our students seem not to make connections and without them it is impossible to begin teaching with an organising framework recognising the interdependence of disciplines, the constructedness of knowledge, and the need to eschew closure and certainty.

Where might we turn for an organising framework to enlighten our present practices? We suggest within cultural studies, which Giroux (1993) argues offers possibilities for *a terrain through which cultural borders can be refigured, new social relations constructed, and the role of teachers or engaged critics rethought within the parameters of a politics of resistance and possibility* (Giroux 1993: 211).

Cultural studies is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes, as Graeme Turner argues, counter disciplinary, in so far as it was partly motivated by critiques of academic disciplines (1992: 640). Unlike traditional academic disciplines it does not have a well-defined methodology or clearly demarcated fields for investigation but draws on various bodies of theory - Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism for instance - to produce the knowledge required for a particular project (Grossberg, H., Nelson, C. & Treichler P. 1992: 3).

Its methodology might best be understood in terms of *bricolage* (see Hatton 1990, 1997 for an explanation of the term) and its practices are pragmatic, strategic and self-reflective. In other words, cultural studies is a diverse and often contentious enterprise *encompassing different positions and trajectories in specific contexts* (Grossberg, Nelson & Treichler 1992: 2).

Bennett defines cultural studies as *a term of convenience for a fairly dispersed array of theoretical and political positions...which, however widely divergent they may be in other respects, share a commitment to examining cultural practices from the point of view of their intrication with, and within, relations of power* (cited in Grossberg, H., Nelson, C. & Treichler, P. (1992: 3). Further, it recognises inequalities in social structures and works in the interests of those with fewest resources and those on the margins of power.

During (1993: 6) points to cultural studies as a site for exploring the actual techniques and practices by which individuals form themselves and their lives. He provides an account of the way cultural theorists have turned to language to understand the power of discourse and our construction through its signifying practices. Such explorations draw on a view of language exemplified in Threadgold's argument that language:

> *is not a set of forms with meanings attached. It is a set of complex, evolved, evolving and open semiotic systems where meanings are realised in, and constructed through complex material media, in contradictory and overlapping institutional sites, by sexually, socially and historically positioned speaking subjects, who are subjected to, and constructed in and through signifying networks of power and desire* (Threadgold, T. 1990: 14).

As a discipline, cultural studies is constantly shifting its interests and methods because it is constantly engaged in interaction with a larger historical context. It is both interpretive and evaluative, both intellectual and political, involving some commitment to political action and social reconstruction. Cultural theorists see cultural studies as not only a chronicle of social change but as an intervention, particularly because cultural studies cannot be complacent about its own authority. (During 1993: 20). Its challenge to metadiscourse demands that cultural studies must also consistently reflect upon and problematise its own discursive and material practices.

Missing from this necessarily very brief and superficial discussion of cultural studies, is the influence of those scholars whose ideas have informed various movements and preoccupations within this fluid framework. (See Grossberg et al, 1992, During 1993 & Tarnas 1991 for accounts of the development of cultural studies and its most influential thinkers).

If we are to draw on the frameworks of cultural studies in reconceptualising teacher education, it may mean that our graduates are more inclined to interpret their experiences and their interactions with their students in less constraining and definitive ways. It may mean that they are able to:

- problematise all aspects of practice.
- locate discussions about professional practice in appropriate theoretical and sociocultural discourses.

- interrogate and interrupt taken for granted practices and policies.
- recognise that *everything is dangerous, nothing is innocent* (after Foucault).

Our ideal initial teacher education program would have, each semester, at its centre a subject which we will call cultural studies. It would draw on the disciplines, methods and predispositions referred to earlier in the paper and would serve to connect and interrupt the other subjects studied during the semester. In particular it would also serve to connect the practicum with other requirements, encouraging students to re-interpret, render problematic and challenge their school based experiences.

Our reconceptualising is not to disappear those subjects necessary for students to understand the pedagogy and curriculum of the primary school. They are necessary...but not sufficient. The difference would be, we hope, that knowledge would not be compartmentalised and technicist. The fundamental craft knowledge offered by curriculum subjects would now be embedded in the understandings, methods and dispositions of cultural studies. Perhaps then there would be more possibilities of our students seeing their role as transformative of present social relations and inequalities rather than as simply a reproductive maintenance of the status quo.

For example, the cultural studies subject in one semester might explore new concepts about language. It could explore the verbal codes and signs of our culture emphasising that texts are not mysteriously created by their authors. They are representations in language; they are part of a semiotic system realising our special interests, roles and values. As Halliday (1978) would argue, it is, as we speak and write, that we indicate the semantic options of our language. In these we instantiate social practices and social values which should always be subject to examination, deconstruction, interruption and challenge.

In the subject questions could be asked about...agency and semantic roles, about who does what? To whom? Who gives what? To whom? Who classifies? Who is classified? Who is the source of causation? Who sees? Who thinks? Who speaks? Who feels? Who acts? We begin to understand the complexity of utterance, yes, but in so doing we begin to see the

discourses upon which we draw. We may see who holds the power, who is marginalised and where the silences remain.

Conclusion

The Minister of Education in NSW, teachers and the community in general are right to be concerned about instances of disruptive and violent behaviour in schools. Whilst the evidence indicates that boys are more often involved in forms of anti-social behaviour, it is simplistic and ultimately destructive to hail them as *the problem.* It is problematising not hailing that is needed. It is imperative that we provide opportunities for teachers to interrogate the complexities of current debates around boys, schooling and the construction of identity. In particular, we want to advance the reconceptualising of teacher education to have it more situated in the realities of schools and framed by the intellectual dispositions to interrupt, interrogate, problematise, deconstruct and celebrate uncertainty, ambiguity and ambivalence.

Perhaps then teachers might be able to help boys, girls, and boys and girls, play out the possibilities of resisting and transgressing the hegemonies of gender, class and race (and sexuality, although that is the silence of this paper). At the moment we have to agree with Kenway (1997) when she writes that policy imperatives in Australian gender reform *barely scratch the surface of what it means to be a boy or girl at school* (Kenway 1997: 132-133). While ever that remains we would argue that boys will inevitably be *problems* and boys will continue to feature strongly in lists of school suspensions.

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Appendix A

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS: BEGINNING TEACHERS

Background

MACQT has been asked to provide advice to the Minister on training requirements to give teachers the capacity to assert, maintain and restor classroom discipline as well as strategies to cope with bullying and playground violence. This will involve:

- identifying current practices/strategies, policy and support programs for managing student behaviour in initial teacher education and ongoing professional development and,
- identifying aspects that student teachers and beginning teachers find most challenging in dealing with the management of student behaviour in and out of the classroom.

The questions below are designed to allow respondents to reflect upon their experiences as they relate to the terms of reference.

1. What strategies are you using for coping with student discipline and control within and outside the classroom?

2. Were the student behaviour management issues you have had to deal with so far in your career those that you expected to have to deal with:
   - in the classroom?
   - in the playground?

3. Has there been any change in your coping behaviour over time?

4. How well prepared were you for handling student discipline and control by your initial teacher education courses? How well did the following help prepare you to deal with student behaviour management issues:
   - non practicum component in your teacher education courses?
   - practicum/school based experience in teacher education courses?

5. a) Do you think your teacher education program could have better prepared you to deal with student behaviour management issues in terms of:
      - the non practicum component?
      - the practicum component?

   b) Did you receive sufficient information about policies relating to student behaviour management?

6. a) How do you now get advice about how to deal with student behaviour management issues:
      - through school based support following your appointment?
      - from another classroom teacher at the school?

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- from teachers from another school?
- through a mentor?
- from a member of the school executive?
- from the principal?
- from a lecturer from the university where you did your teacher training?
- other?

b) What advice has been most helpful?

c) Why?

7. a) What sort of support do the teachers in your school provide to assist you in dealing with student behaviour management issues?

b) What form does this support take?

c) Are there any school resources or strategies that were useful?

8. a) Is there an induction program in your school?

b) How has the program helped you?

c) How could the program have supported you better in terms of dealing with student behaviour management issues?

9. What messages would you like to provide about how teachers could be better prepared to deal with student behaviour management issues by:

- teacher education institutions?
- the employing authorities?
- the school to which the beginning teacher is appointed?

Appendix B

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS: EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

Background

MACQT has been asked to provide advice to the Minister on training requirements to give teachers the capacity to assert, maintain and restore classroom discipline as well as strategies to cope with bullying and playground violence. This will involve:

- identifying current practices/strategies, policy and support programs for managing student behaviour in initial teacher education and ongoing professional development and,

- identifying aspects that student teachers and beginning teachers and experienced teachers find most challenging in dealing with the management of student behaviour in and out of the classroom.

The questions below are designed to allow respondents to reflect upon their experiences as they relate to the terms of reference.

A. Your Own Experiences

1. What strategies are you using for coping with student discipline and control
   - inside the classroom?
   - outside the classroom?

2. Think back over the last ten years or so:

   - How have the issues and challenges in relation to discipline and management change?

   - How have your coping strategies changed?

3. a) How do you get advice about how to deal with student behaviour management issues:

      - through school based support?
      - from another classroom teacher at the school?
      - from teachers from another school?
      - through a mentor?
      - from a member of the school executive?
      - from the principal?
      - through professional development programs?

   b) What advice has been most helpful?

   c) Why?

   d) Do you receive sufficient information about policies relating to student behaviour

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management?

4. a) What advice would you give on desirable professional development to assist teachers to cope with student behaviour?

B. Perception of Experiences and Preparedness of Beginning Teachers

1. i) How well do you think beginning teachers are prepared for dealing with student behaviour and management issues, inside and outside the classroom?

ii) What, in your experience, are the major concerns in this area?

2. What does your school do to support beginning teachers?

Specifically, what is done to assist young teachers to deal appropriately with discipline and management issues?

3. How have you been involved in supporting beginning teachers?
What approaches do you adopt?
How do you feel your advice is perceived?
What factors, in your view, contribute to the development of strong professional rapport between experienced and beginning teachers.

C. General Question

What messages would you like to provide about how teachers could be better prepared to deal with student behaviour management issues by:-

- teacher education institutions?
- the employing authorities?

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